



Press Release



**Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
Michigan, 14th District**

**Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

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**Conyers Calls for Investigation
of DOJ Voting Section and Voting Rights Act Preclearance Procedures**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representative John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, released the following statement today concerning the revelation in the *Washington Post* that political appointees overruled a staff recommendation that the Texas congressional redistricting plan of 2003 be rejected as retrogressive under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act:

“At the outset, I expressed concern about the politicization of the Voting Right Act, Section 5, preclearance process for the Texas congressional redistricting plan. In a November 25, 2003, letter to the Attorney General, I stated that it was clear that the Texas congressional redistricting process had been tainted by much more than the customary political rivalry accompanying decennial redistricting and requested that all political appointees be recused from consideration of the plan. This request was met with a cold response. Because the then Chief of the Voting Section failed to sign the “no objection” letter giving DOJ preclearance for the plan, I felt that there was a strong implication of undue political influence and requested a copy of the recommendation memorandum prepared by the career staff from the Attorney General that December. That request also met with a cold response.

The story in today’s *Washington Post* finally lifts the lid on process about which I have been seeking more detailed information for over two years. As I had always feared, the Section 5 process had been compromised at the highest levels of Congress and the Department of Justice. Given the continuing importance of the Section 5, especially in light of similar concerns about the process in Georgia and Mississippi, the Judiciary Committee must conduct rigorous oversight of the Civil Rights Division to protect the integrity of the Voting Rights Act. I will ask Chairman Sensenbrenner to schedule hearings to get to the bottom of what is going on within the Department. As we move forward, this situation cannot be allowed to become a distraction from the important work of renewing and restoring the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act.”

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